

FEE POLICY AND POUND PLUS POLICY FRAMEWORK 2021/22

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1 Background

- 1.1 The Principal and Executive Management Group (EMG) are responsible for setting course fees within a framework approved by Governors.
- 1.2 The fee policy framework needs to be transparent and straightforward to operate.
- 1.3 The College is committed to providing wide access to education to all those who will benefit from it and the fee policy framework therefore needs to endeavour to ensure that finance does not become a barrier to learning.

2 Formula Funded Courses

- 2.1 Courses that lead to an award or accreditation are funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) under devolved funding arrangements from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) from the Adult Education Budget (AEB). There is also a prescribed approach to fees charged to learners associated with the funding formula and the College fees policy follows this approach which is explained in the paragraphs which follow.

Courses up to and including Level 2

- 2.2 Learners in receipt of Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or a wider work related Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) benefit, who are unemployed and on wider state benefits, or who fall within the GLA's "employed and low wage" definition, are designated as "fully-funded" and are entitled to full fee remission; the College will receive funding for them in full from the GLA/ESFA and no fee is chargeable to the learner. The College is not permitted to charge any mandatory fee to these learners for anything that is necessary to achieve their qualification or learning aim. Accordingly no tuition or materials fee will be charged to these learners.
- 2.3 Learners who are not in receipt of these benefits are designated as "co-funded" and the cost of their course is shared between the GLA/ESFA and the learner. Under the funding formula, the GLA/ESFA will deduct an "assumed fee element" which is an amount equal to 50% of the base funding for the course. It is assumed that the learner will contribute to this amount, but the College is free to set its own fee for the course and is not obliged to adopt the 50% of base rate amount. WM College fees for these courses have a historical base which may be higher or lower than the "assumed fee element" and which have been determined to reflect market forces, demand for the courses, competitor prices, etc. For 2020/21, the College aims to increase these fees by 3% rounded up to the next £5 over the 2020/21 level, but during the detailed curriculum and business planning process these will be considered on a course by course basis, with due regard to the 50% model figure and the other relevant factors which might result in a different increase or even in exceptional circumstances, a decrease.
- 2.4 For courses with particularly expensive materials or consumables, Curriculum Managers will identify an appropriate "Materials Fee" as part of the detailed curriculum and business planning process and this will be added to the basic fee to determine the total course fee. An inflationary increase will be applied to these fees for 2021/22.

- 2.5 All maths and English courses up to level 2, including GCSE courses as these are level 2, automatically attract full funding and will have no fee payable by the learner except where the learner already holds a grade C / grade 4 in the subject and is seeking to better their grade (in which case there is no entitlement to funding).
- 2.6 All pre-entry level and accredited ESOL courses delivered on-site at either the College's Crowndale Road or Kentish Town, including any online sessions, sites fall under the formula funding stream and the above classifications apply. Fees for these ESOL courses will be based on a rate of £4.05 per hour which is again an increase of 3% rounded up.
- 2.7 Learners in these categories who are assessed to pay fees may apply to the Learner Financial Support Fund (LFSF) for financial assistance with the fees. Where successful they will receive an award of 100% of their assessed fees.
- 2.8 Where an accredited or other formula funded course is delivered at a community venue, the normal funding rules would apply, with "fully funded" learners having no fee and "co-funded" learners being assessed for a fee. However, such co-funded learners would be able to apply for support from the College's Learner Financial Support Fund (LFSF) and are a priority group for awards. As long as the co-funded learner meets the LFSF qualifying criteria, they could reasonably expect to receive an award for 100% of the assessed fees.

Courses at Level 3 or Higher

- 2.9 The Government is identifying a list of level 3 courses which will automatically be approved for full funding. Learners, of any age, on these courses will not have to pay any fee.
- 2.10 Learners aged 19-23, on courses not on the list referred to in paragraph 2.9 above, and who do not already possess a full level 3 qualification, follow the same rules as outlined above for courses up to level 2, if their course or programme of course is deemed to lead to their "first full level 3" qualification.
- 2.11 All other learners aged 19 or over, studying on courses at level 3 or above, are not entitled to any funding from the GLA/ESFA but may apply for a non-means tested, Government "Advanced Learning Loan" from Student Finance England (the Student Loans Company) if the course is "loan funded".
- 2.12 Courses that qualify for loan financing are identified as such in the Course Guide published by the College and are primarily the College's 32 week Foundation Diploma arts courses (£5,420), and the level 3 diploma course in Supporting Teaching and Learning (£2,225).
- 2.13 Loans are made available for the lower of the course fee set by the College or the prescribed national base rate funding for the course. WM College's policy to date has been to set course fees at the same as the national base rate for the course, and this will be adopted again in 2021/22.
- 2.14 A small Loans Bursary fund is provided to the College to support Advanced Learning Loan funded learners with other related costs of undertaking the course such as travel or materials.

3 Community Learning Funded Courses

- 3.1 Almost all the College's non-accredited and short arts courses, together with some of the courses delivered in community venues, fall under the Community Learning (CL) funding stream. Funding for CL does not have "per learner" funding calculated according to a formula, but rather is effectively a block grant to the College to deliver courses that meet the needs of the community. Following the transfer of IALs' non-accredited work from formula funded to CL in 2016/17, the CL element of the College's funding changed from a modest £230k to a substantial £2.6m.
- 3.2 Generating additional income and revenue is central to the objective of driving up participation in community learning within a context of constrained public finances. "Pound Plus" describes how learning providers can show that they are maximising the value of their Community Learning funding from the public purse. It refers to the additional income or cost savings generated over and above the core grant income and usually takes the form of course fees from participants, access to accommodation for delivery of learning at no (or reduced) cost, volunteer workers, or donations of equipment or resources. For WM College, the primary sources are course fees on Community Learning funded courses and the provision of serviced community spaces by College partners for delivery of courses in community locations. The following paragraphs set out the College's approach to implementing the "pound plus" concept
- 3.3 The College expects that most learners engaging in CL activity will pay a fee. For learners on means tested benefit, this was a new expectation from 2017/18 and the College sought to mitigate its impact by offering a substantial discount on the fee to these learners to help the transition, with an intention of reducing the discount incrementally as it becomes more embedded.
- 3.4 Fees for these courses have a historical base which took account of market forces, demand for the courses, competitor prices, etc. For 2021/22, in line with the approach to accredited, formula funded courses, the College aims generally to increase these fees by 3% rounded up, but during the detailed curriculum and business planning process these will be considered on a course by course basis.
- 3.5 The discount rate to CL funded learners on means tested benefits will be set at 50% for 2021/22. Given the scale of discount already being awarded, these learners will **not** be entitled to apply for any further support towards fees from the Learner Financial Support Fund.
- 3.6 As the CL courses are typically of 5 or 10 week duration and for 2½ - 3 hours per week with a fee of around £175 - £195 before discount for the 10 week courses, the typical discounted fee equates to £90 - £100 for a full term of classes or £3 - £4 per hour of study.
- 3.7 Where courses delivered at community venues fall under Community Learning, in recognition of the partner community organisation providing accommodation at no cost to the College and in line with the "pound plus" approach, no further fee will be charged to the learner.
- 3.8 Where there is a compelling reason due to the nature of the community partner or other College strategic relationship, the Principal may use her discretion to waive the fees for the delivery of a particular class or at a particular venue.
- 3.9 Learners on CL funded courses who do not qualify for the automatic 50% reduction may apply to the Learner Financial Support Fund for financial assistance with the fees. Where successful they will receive an award of 25% of the fee.

4 Studio Practice and Unfunded Courses

- 4.1 Studio Practice courses provide experienced learners, who have already been through College courses to learn the essential techniques of an art, with access to studio spaces to continue to develop their skills. The courses are supported by tutors but have less formal teaching and enable learners to work on their own chosen projects.
- 4.2 Fees for 2021/22 for all studio practice courses will be increased to £8.95 per hour (2019/20 - £8.50 per hour). There will be an additional materials fee added to the course fee as appropriate, but again the applicable rates will usually be increased by 3-5%.
- 4.3 Learners on Studio Practice courses will be eligible to apply for support from the LFSF fund for 50% of the fee.
- 4.4 The College runs a few courses which do not qualify for any funding or loans. These are generally courses for employers, but the Award in Education and Training is also unfunded. The fees for these will be set according to market forces and demand to try and get an optimal size and financially viable course. For 2021/22 the LFSF will be made available for learners on the Award in Education and Training providing 50% fee support.

5 Arts Online Courses and Clubs

- 5.1 Where non-accredited Arts provision is planned to take place **completely** online, courses will be priced £5/hr (before discount). This represents a reduction of approx. £1.50/hour recognising that learners will not be provided with materials or specialist equipment, as they would be if learning onsite in our WM College studios and workshops. Online Arts courses should be planned as such although, if materials and basic tools are necessary in order for learners to participate, this information will be clearly stated on all Course Information with links and approximate, accessible costs provided.
- 5.2 Arts Clubs should access Community Learning funding and, where possible, take place online, so a cost of £5/hr would apply.

6 Financial Support for Learners

- 6.1 WM College is committed to making learning accessible to all who will benefit from it and is determined that finance should not be a barrier to learning. A range of support measures is therefore put in place to provide financial help to learners.
- 6.2 Learners on Universal Credit or other relevant means-tested benefits pay no fee on accredited or formula funded courses and are entitled to an automatic 50% discount on Community Learning funded courses.
- 6.3 A Learner Financial Support Fund has been created with the following awards available to learners with low household incomes:
 - For co-funded learners on formula funded courses 100%
 - For learners on Community Funded learning 25%
 - For learners on Studio classes 50%
 - For learners on unfunded teacher training course 50%

6.4 To incentivise learners to enrol early and to avoid the busy September enrolment weeks, an “early enrolment” discount of 10% will be made available from the launch of the Course Guide in June 2020 until Friday 10 September 2021. The date may be extended at the Principal’s discretion.

6.3 Learners cannot claim more than one discount.

7 Payment by Instalments

7.1 Where individual course fees (or the total of multiple course fees) exceed £250, learners may pay the fees by instalments with an initial deposit on enrolment and up to five further equal monthly instalments, payable by direct debit. The exact number of instalments and value of each is determined by the length of the course as the final instalment must fall before the end of the course.

7.2 There is no interest or administration charge applied to instalment plans.

7.3 Learners applying to pay by instalments must complete and sign a direct debit form at the time of enrolment.

7.4 If a direct debit instalment collection is not honoured when claimed by the College, the College will make a further attempt to collect the amount due 7 days later. If this collection is also rejected, then the direct debit agreement will be cancelled and that collection amount, together the remaining balance of the fee, will fall due for immediate payment by the learner.

7.5 All direct debit arrangements will be operated in accordance with the Direct Debit Guarantee scheme.

8 Learners Aged Under 19

8.1 The College receives a small amount of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) from the 16-19 funding budget for learners aged under 19 on 31 August at the start of the year of their programme of study. At WM College the vast majority of such learners are enrolled on the 32 week Arts Foundation Diploma courses, but the funding is not restricted to this course as long as the learners engage in a programme of learning that meets the conditions of funding, including in particular those related to English and maths.

8.2 It is a condition of funding that learners on ESFA 16-19 funded courses are not charged any mandatory fee for anything that is necessary to achieve their qualification or learning aim. Accordingly no tuition or materials fee will be charged to these learners.

8.3 The ESFA provides a small Student Financial Support fund to provide financial assistance to learners under this funding stream with travel costs and additional course related costs.

9 Overseas Learners

- 9.1 Learners who are resident outside the UK (following “Brexit”, this now includes those from the EEA area) are not entitled to any subsidy from public funds and therefore must be charged a fee which covers the full cost of providing their learning, including associated overheads. This is subject to change and still awaiting Government Guidance.
- 9.2 Fees for such learners for 2021/22 will be held at £12.50 per hour (2020/21 - £12.50 per hour). This rate may be varied at the discretion of the Principal or the Vice Principal where there is a case of student hardship and it can be demonstrated that a reduced rate will still cover the direct costs of all aspects of the learner’s study and attendance at College and not risk recourse to subsidy from public funds.

10 Communicating the Fee Policy

- 10.1 This fee policy framework will be supplemented by information for College managers, other College staff and learners to explain the fee structures and availability of financial support in clear language and terms as applicable to them. This will be published in the Course Guide, on the College website (by virtue of being in the Course Guide) and elsewhere or in other formats as necessary.